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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 15, 2018

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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO, POLICE COMMISSIONER O'NEILL HOLD
MEDIA AVAILABILITY TO DISCUSS ARRESTS IN NYC TERROR PLOT**

Police Commissioner James P O'Neill: Good evening, everyone. Thanks for being here tonight. We're here tonight with the Mayor, the U.S. Attorney from the Southern District Geoffrey Berman, the FBI Assistant Director of the New York Office Bill Sweeney, and John Miller. I think it's very important we brief you this evening on the arrest of two individuals by the Joint Terrorist Task Force on a number of federal charges related to explosives. U.S. Attorney Berman will speak more to those charges.

As you will hear, this incident began with a December 4th, 2017 threat to a high school in Harlem. A 15-year-old student was arrested by the NYPD Intelligence Division on that bomb threat. In January, a teacher in that school abruptly resigned and school authorities reviewing his laptop noticed some material that was questionable, and they contacted our detectives. Based on a follow-up investigation by the Joint Terrorist Task Force – that's what lead to those arrests today. Deputy Commissioner John Miller will provide some additional information about this investigation. However, this case is in its very early stages and there is much detail we cannot provide.

So, basically, as usual, this is preliminary information. We're going to take a few questions at the end of this. But, again, just to let you know, we can't go into too much detail.

Mr. Mayor?

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much, Commissioner. Commissioner, I want to thank everybody at the NYPD and I want to thank our federal partners for their great work.

Once again, the brave men and women of the NYPD and of the FBI have done extraordinary work and, in this case, likely saved many, many lives, and I want to thank them on behalf of all New Yorkers. I also want to say that the staff at the school did something very important, and their work was crucial here as well. And I want to thank them for their vigilance and their diligence and the smart work they did in immediately alerting law enforcement.

This is a moment to remind all New Yorkers, remind everyone that the idea that if you see something, you say something is more pertinent than ever. We get daily reminders of the threats arrayed against us, but what we're seeing here in this case already is some good people stepped forward with information and that information was crucial to law enforcement.

So, I just want to urge everyone, if at any moment, no matter where you are, no matter what you're doing, you have information that you find unsettling, you see something suspicious, come forward to law enforcement, because you never know if that might be the moment when you helped to save a life.

I will only say, and this is another example also of the very close working relationship between the NYPD and the FBI, the City of New York, and our federal partners. This relationship has grown, and grown over the years. It is part of what keeps all New Yorkers safe.

We have to be clear at this moment, even though this was an unsettling case – and you'll hear the details. From what we know at this point, the individuals involved have all been apprehended. Again, this is preliminary information, but there is no additional imminent threat directed at New York City at this time.

And finally, I just want to remind everyone there is always a reason why New York City finds itself in the crosshairs, because this city is a great beacon of democracy, of a pluralistic society. We've got a lot of enemies out there, but what we've proven time and time again is the great work of law enforcement working with the people has an extraordinary impact and keeps this city safe, and we are once again going to go forward tomorrow with that same spirit of resiliency for which New Yorkers are famous.

Thank you.

Commissioner O'Neill: And now, we're going to hear from a great partner of the NYPD, the Assistant Director In Charge of the New York FBI Office, Bill Sweeney.

Bill?

FBI Assistant Director In Charge William Sweeney: Thanks, Jimmy. Good evening, everybody. I'd like to extend my thanks to those individuals that initially brought this information to our attention. That information from citizens, combined with the investigation and the operations that followed stopped a significant threat to public safety. The FBI's New York Joint Terrorism Task Force operates in a constant state of readiness.

We will continue to review the evidence that we obtained this morning. We have no indication that there's a continued threat posed by these individuals, but we do not stop an investigation just because somebody's in custody.

I would ask, if you have information related to these individuals, to please call our tip line at 212-384-1000 – press the number three, and you'll be directed to somebody to take your information. Or, you can provide information online at www.FBI.gov/tips.

Thank you.

Commissioner O'Neill: Okay, thanks Bill, John Miller is now going to give you the chronology of events.

Deputy Commissioner of Intelligence & Counterterrorism John Miller: Thanks, Commissioner. On December 4th, there was a bomb threat made to an Upper Manhattan school that triggered a call to police, in relation to the bomb threat, and began an investigation by the Leads Investigation Unit from the Intelligence Bureau into where that threat came from and what the source of it was.

That investigation continued, involving interviews with students, teachers, and others. As part of that investigation, a development – on January 10th was the resignation of Christian Toro, a school teacher from that school, which caused investigators to follow up. Two days after that, Christian Toro's brother, as outlined in the complaint, turned in a Department of Education laptop that had been assigned to Christian Toro while he was a teacher to the Board of Education.

A review of that laptop by Board of Education officials uncovered what appeared to be a document included – including bomb making instructions. That of course caused the investigation to continue and the FBI, NYPD Joint-Terrorism Task Force, joined the efforts of the Intelligence Bureau and the Detective Bureau of the NYPD to follow additional leads. This week, additional investigative steps led to interviews and developments in the case that amounted to probable cause for the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force to seek a search warrant from the US Attorney's Office and a federal judge to go 2121 Matthews Avenue and search an apartment belonging to Christian and Tyler Toro.

In the course of that search which was conducted beginning this morning and went on through much of the day, over thirty pounds of chemicals which taken together in certain combinations constitute explosive precursor materials were recovered. Christian and Tyler Toro were taken to the 49th Precinct where they were taken into custody by the FBI and charged as you see in the complaint with possession of explosive precursors and giving explosives to minor.

The charges have to do, as is outlined in the complaint, with allegations that at least two students, who were – in – present in the Toro's apartments, emptied explosive black powder from fireworks, harvesting them from fireworks and putting them into separate containers. As well as the explosive materials and what appeared to be simulated weapons that were found in the course of the search, there was a diary that appearing to belong to Toro's brother that had notations in it about something called "Operation Flash", statements contained in the diary about discarding and doing away with physical evidence and other documents that had statements such as "the small ones" – let me start with the quote – "under the full moon, the small ones will know terror."

We don't know, at this point in the investigation, other than criminal charges related to the explosives, the full breadth of what these materials mean, so as Assistant Director Sweeney said,

we are going to continue that investigation. I would like to underscore and underline again, with these two individuals in custody, with the people we've interviewed, with the evidence we've seen so far, there is no reason to believe at this point that there is any remaining threat to New York City or any school. We are at an early, early stage of this investigation and we will try take some questions.

Commissioner O'Neill: Before we take some questions, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Geoffrey Berman is going to talk about the charges.

U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman: Good evening. Earlier today, members of the New York Joint Terrorism Task Force arrested Christian Toro and Tyler Toro in the course of a search of their residence in the Bronx. My comments here today must be fairly limited as the investigation remains ongoing.

The complaint filed today charges Christian Toro on two counts – one, unlawful manufacture of a destructive device, and, two, distribution of explosive materials to a minor. In addition, the complaint charges Tyler Toro with unlawful manufacture of a destructive device.

Both defendants were arrested earlier today. They were promptly brought to the courthouse in the southern district of New York. Earlier this evening, both defendants were presented on the complaint before a United States Magistrate Judge, Debra Freeman, at which time they were assigned counsel and pleaded not-guilty. The defendants were ordered detained on consent. A bail hearing for Christian Toro has been scheduled for Wednesday February 21st. No bail hearing has yet been scheduled with respect to Tyler Toro. A preliminary hearing date has been scheduled for March 19th.

I want to thank the FBI, represented here today by Bill Sweeney, Assistant Director in Charge of the New York Field Office. The FBI's work, and the work of the many agents and agencies that form New York's Joint Terrorism Task Force is simply outstanding. I also want to thank the NYPD, represented here by Commissioner James O'Neill and Deputy Commissioner John Miller.

Thank you.

Commissioner O'Neill: At this part, we're going to take some questions.

Question: Were either of these names on any of your radars prior to December? Also can you say which school he taught at in Harlem and do we know the job of the other brother?

Commissioner O'Neill: John?

Deputy Commissioner Miller: So first, let me make a correction. I had indicated that when the computer was turned in it was a Department of Education technician that did the review. It was actually not a Department of Education school. It is a charter school not directly associated with the Department of Education. It was a technician who worked for the school who was looking at the computer when it was returned.

Neither of these two individuals was on our radar before this, nor did they have any criminal background that preceded this investigation.

Question: John, can you name of the school and was he a science teacher?

Deputy Commissioner Miller: We're not naming the school, and it is not contained within the complaint, and we're fairly limited to stay within the four corners of the complaint.

Question: Was he a science teacher? [Inaudible]

Deputy Commissioner Miller: Can't answer that.

Commissioner O'Neill: Tony?

Question: [Inaudible] mentioned about bomb threat that was phoned in and then in close proximity to that was the resignation of Christian Toro – is there a relationship, have you ascertained a relationship between the bomb threat and his resignation and the investigation made [inaudible]?

Commissioner O'Neill: I know this is going to be kind of frustrating for everybody, but we're not going to go into that level of detail right now, Tony.

John?

Question: Was these two brothers from the Bronx – were they American-born and [inaudible]?

Commissioner O'Neill: I don't think we have what title his occupation is, but we're not going to go too deep.

Rocco?

Question: [Inaudible]

Commissioner O'Neill: I'm not going to go that deep.

Rocco?

Question: Is it clear how close they were to actually carrying something out – A? And B – I know it's early, but I'll ask it anyway – is it clear why they [inaudible]?

Commissioner O'Neill: No, we don't, and again Rocco that's part of the investigation. As we spend more time, we'll be able to figure these things out and give you some answers at a later date.

Zolan?

Question: Can you clarify [inaudible]?

Deputy Commissioner Miller: That was something that developed as a result of the investigation of the bomb scare to the school. He was charged in that case but not in custody as of this morning's search warrant.

Question: On the note that you read that said 'under the full moon the small ones will know terror' is there any indication [inaudible]?

Deputy Commissioner Miller: We can't interpret what the meaning of that is. It will certainly be a factor within the investigation. That was recovered in a separate piece of paper, not the diary, so we're trying to determine what that means.

Question: Was this self-contained or were they making contact with other terror groups?

Commissioner O'Neill: This is again a preliminary part of the investigation. That hasn't been determined yet.

Question: Question – the victim in the rape was she a student? And you talked about [inaudible] explosive [inaudible]?

Commissioner O'Neill: The first one – we're not going to go into that level of detail. And with the precursors, we haven't made that determination yet.

Unknown: Folks, we're getting into a lot of [inaudible] details. As the commissioner said, look, this is early in the investigation. We'll probably have more answers later, but unfortunately we're not going to be able to get into a lot more detail than [inaudible].

Commissioner O'Neill: Okay, I thank everybody for being here. This is how we keep New York City safe. As you see standing up here with me is the U.S. Attorney, Bill Sweeney from the FBI – this is how we keep the city safe, and this is how we keep the school safe, making sure we're all working together.

Okay, thank you very much.

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